

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached replacement sheets of drawings include changes to Figs. 1, 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b. These attached sheets 1-3, which include all Figs. 1-5b, replace original sheets 1-3, which include the same Figures. In Figs. 1, 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b, previously omitted reference numeral 10 has been added.

Attachments: Three Replacement Drawings Sheets

Three Annotated Drawing Sheets Showing Changes

REMARKS

Claims 1-22 are presently pending. Reconsideration and allowance of all presently pending claims is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Drawings

The drawings stand objected to as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. §1.84(p)(5) because they do not include certain reference signs mentioned in the description. In response, enclosed herewith are three corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.121(d) that include the previously omitted reference numeral. Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the drawings be withdrawn.

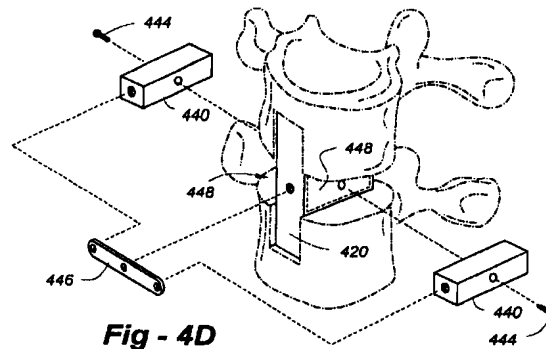
Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 1-8, 10, and 13-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,432,107 to Ferree ("Ferree"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection for the following reasons.

The PTO provides in MPEP § 2131 that "[t]o anticipate a claim, the reference must teach every element of the claim" With regard to independent claims 1, 13, and 19, Applicant submits that Ferree fails to teach every element of those claims.

In particular, Ferree fails to teach at least "a first transverse plate connected to the sagittally-extending plate such that the sagittally-extending plate extends through the first transverse plate" and "a second transverse plate connected to the sagittally-extending plate such that the sagittally-extending plate extends through the second transverse plate," as recited in claim 1. On the contrary, as best illustrated in Fig. 4D, which is reproduced below for ease of reference, element 420 of Ferree, which the Examiner equates to the claimed "sagittally-extending plate" does not extend through each of the elements 440, which the Examiner equate to the

claimed first and second transverse plates; rather, the elements 440 are attached (via screws 444) to opposite sides of the element 420.



In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that Ferree fails to anticipate claim 1 for failure to teach every element thereof. Claims 13 and 19 include limitations similar to those of claim 1 and are therefore also not anticipated by Ferree. Claims 2-8, 10, 14-18, and 20-22 depend from and further limit claims 1, 10, and 19 and are therefore also not anticipated by Ferree.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

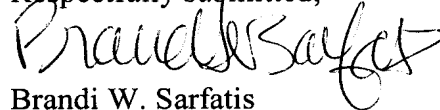
Claims 9, 11, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferree in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0116065 to Jackson ("Jackson"). In response, Applicant submits that, because claims 9, 11, and 12 depend from and further limit claim 1, they are also in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above in connection with claim 1.

Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that claims 1, 13, and 19 are in condition for allowance. Claims 2-12, 14-18, and 20-22 depend from independent claims 1, 13, and 19 and are therefore also deemed to be in condition for allowance.

An early formal notice of allowance of claims 1-22 is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Brandi W. Sarfatis
Registration No. 37,713

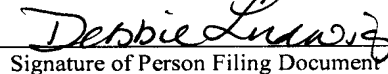
Dated: 10/16/06
HAYNES AND BOONE, LLP
901 Main Street, Suite 3100
Dallas, Texas 75202-3789
Telephone: 214/651-5896
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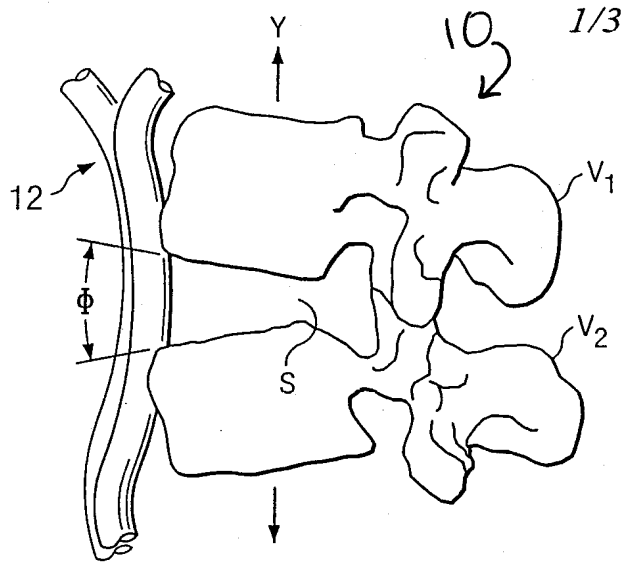


Fig. 1

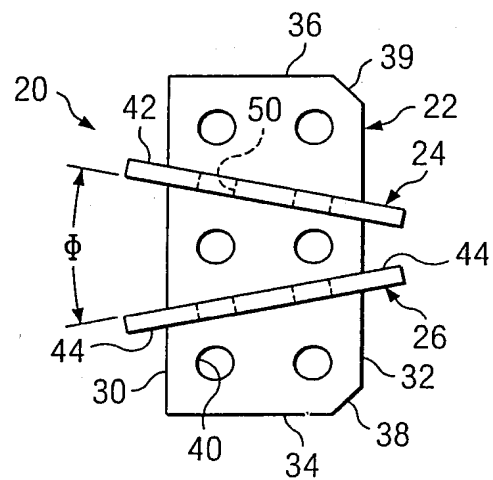


Fig. 2

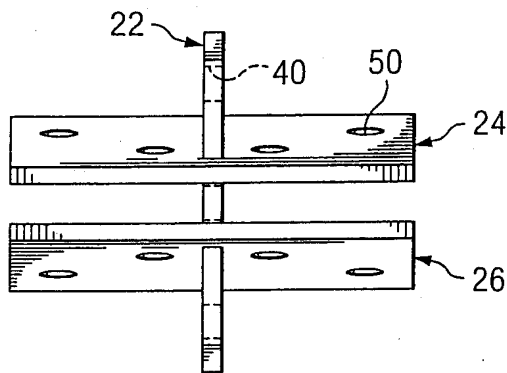


Fig. 3a

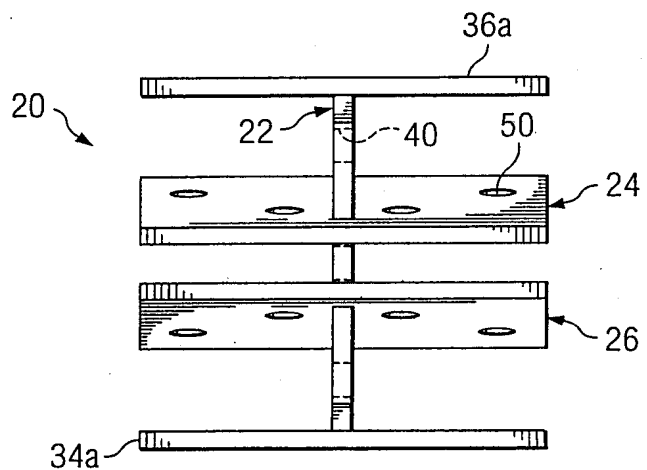
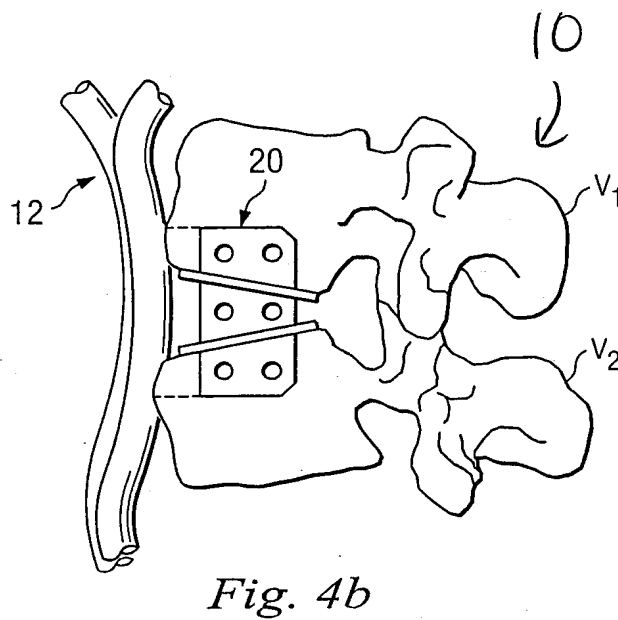
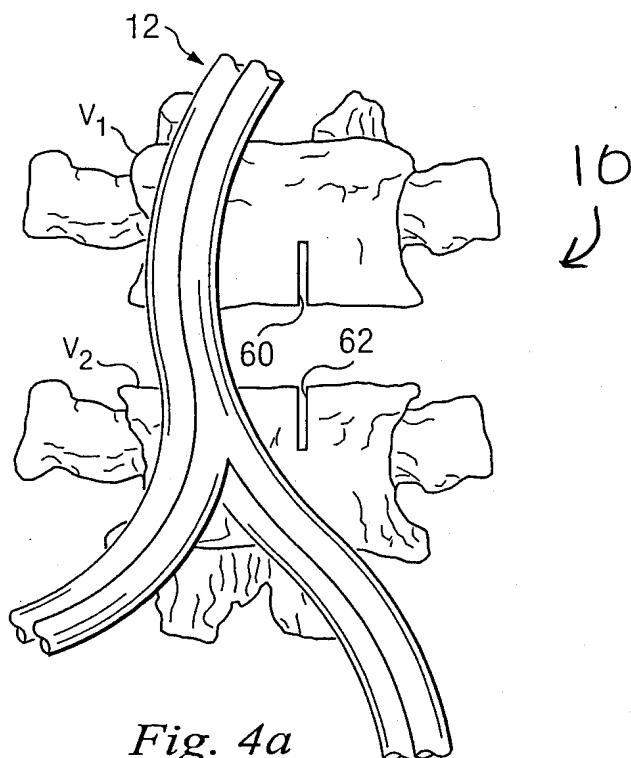


Fig. 3b

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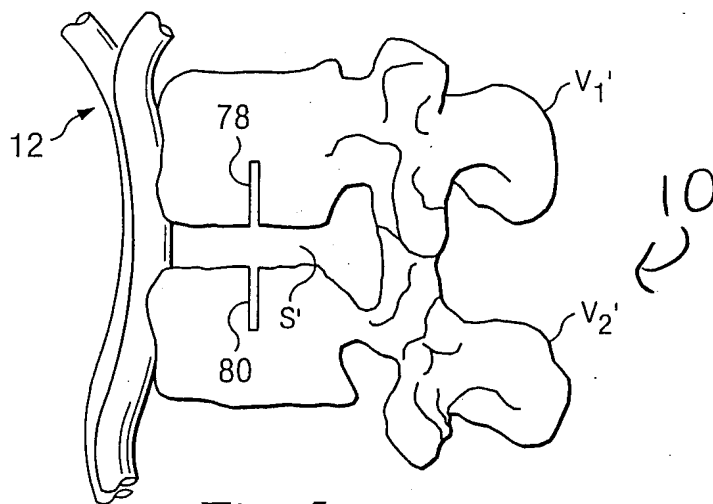


Fig. 5a

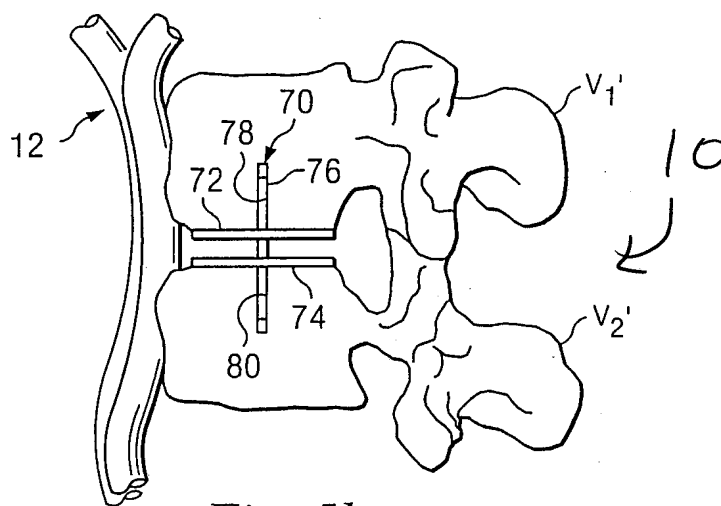


Fig. 5b